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97

COLLECTED SONGS AND LYRICS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

SONGS TO DESIDERIA

and other Lyrics

MEMORIES

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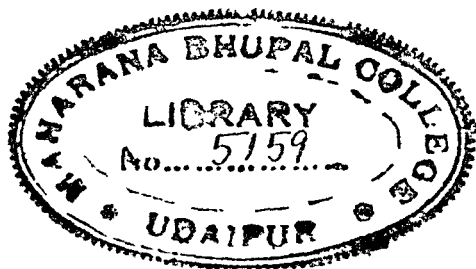
THE IDOLATRY OF SCIENCE

LETTERS TO MY GRANDSON. 4 vols.

FAMOUS VICTORIANS I HAVE KNOWN

COLLECTED SONGS AND LYRICS

By
The Hon^{ble}.
STEPHEN COLERIDGE



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PREFACE

THERE must, I suppose, be some who will regard the projection upon the public of a volume of verse by one of my name as savouring of audacity.

Did I bear a name unknown, the critics would approach the volume with kindly condescension—

“Stat magni nominis umbra,”

and the umbra becomes the more oppressive with the magnitude of the name.

But I recall the successful temerity of Hartley Coleridge, who ventured to appear on the lower slopes of Parnassus, upon the lofty summit of which his father reposed, and stimulated by that example I place my timorous foot upon the lovely mountain whose top is lost in glory.

Some of the songs in this book have become familiar to the public by being lifted from obscurity by the beautiful art of the musician.

Others still await that felicitous adornment.

I now submit them all to the praise, censure or neglect of the world.

S.C.

“ I have seen the day

That I have worn a visor ; and could tell

A whispering tale in a fair lady's ear

Such as would please ;—'tis gone, 'tis gone, 'tis gone ! ”

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COLLECTED SONGS AND LYRICS

SAPPHICS TO THE NIGHTINGALE

Down through the ages comes that voice of sorrow,
Sorrow and burning passion intermingled.

Ah ! piteous bird ! you fill my soul with anguish
With your lamenting !

Hark to the yearning of those welling love notes,
Heart-ache and longing poured upon the night air,
Filling the deep sequestered lonely woodlands
With tender beauty.

Under the stars immutable above me,
Silent, serene, untouched by pain or passion,
Here in the dusk I listen to the music,—
Love's consecration.

Cease ! cease those notes that, like the distant echo
Of a far flute across the lake's still waters,
From the lost world bring back the voice long perished
Of my beloved.

THE FAITHFUL FRIEND

I HAVE a friend, a better friend has none,
As faithful as a dial to the sun.
When evil days or happy days betide
That loving friend is ever at my side.

When wealth is mine, alike my friend is there
As when disaster brings me to despair;
And when I still have nothing left to give
He stays with me my spirits to revive.

If for a little while we are apart
His joyous welcome home delights my heart;
When other friends turn cold and go their way,
He clings the closer to me night and day.

I know that when I die he will be found
Alone where they have left me in the ground,
For when a-down life's stairway I descend
My dog will be my last and truest friend.

JOHN AND I

HE brought me up the cottage path
And told me of his love,
And the fire flickered on his hearth
And on the beams above.

It was not to a lordly house
All built of marble stone ;
But the settle in the chimney nook
It was to me a throne.

And there upon the floor I sank
My face upon his knee,
And drew his comely head a-down
In silence tenderly.

Oh ! trumpets for the stately lord,
And banners for his bride ;
But the kettle singing on the hob
Where John and I abide.

For us the little casement panes
Amid the jasmine bowers,
And the murmur of the busy bees
Among the sunny flowers.

SLEEP

QUIET hours are the best
When the sun goes to his rest,
Comforted are mourner's sighs
Neath the deep star-spangled skies;
 Dreaming there
 Lost to care,
Those that sleep need ne'er despair.

Girls and boys throughout the world,
In their downy couches curled,
Soon forget their little woes
When the nurse tucks up their toes;
 Dreaming there
 Lost to care,
Those that sleep need ne'er despair.

Men and women growing old
Peace of mind to folly sold,
Trouble takes them for her own,
Till at night they lay them down;
 Dreaming there
 Lost to care,
Those that sleep need ne'er despair.

TO THOSE AT HOME

SOLITARY on the steep

Of the distant shore I stand,
And across the heaving deep
I stretch out a loving hand.

Trackless wastes may intervene,
Touch and see we cannot yet,
Time and space offend between
By the bonds of body set.

But the mind no fetters knows
And the heart is free to roam,
All around the world it goes
To the door of its own home.

APRIL

THE life begins to stir
The seed in the dark earth,
The twigs along the hedge
Awake into new birth.

The Sun-god climbs the sky,
The wind is in the West,
The robin pipes his love
To sweetheart on her nest.

Ah ! happy little birds
That mate and kiss and part,
To you spring never sings
Songs to a heavy heart.

SUMMER IS COMING

ALL the world is blossoming
Mid the sun and showers,
In the garden such a sight,
All a romp of flowers !

Little larks sing up and up
In the sky above,
Pouring out their happy hearts
Throbbing full of love.

Far away quite out of sight
Winter lurks ahead,
And a long long way behind
His dark days have fled.

Summer, summer, summer, summer
Drives away all sorrow ;
God be thanked for the long days,
Never mind to-morrow.

TIME'S GUERDON

WHEN love first rises on the soul
And lifts it to the skies,
The whole wide world transfigured is
To the impassioned eyes.

The sea and land, the sun and moon,
And every star above,
The fields and streams and far-off hills,
All seem to speak of Love.

But Time comes with his slow footfall
Still with intent to bless,
And daily custom tames the pulse
To quiet tenderness,

And so the lovers of the past
Together. hand in hand,
Pass down the years in sweet accord
Into the silent land.

THE SURRENDER !

LORD of my trembling heart, I yield to thee,
The fight is over, I am spent and faint ;
In vain, in vain I prayed not to desire
And shut the door against love's fierce complaint.

No more can I forbid my King his throne
Or save myself from sinking at his feet,—
Lift me in thy strong arms and hold me close,
My Conqueror ! Is the surrender sweet ?

THE FAREWELL

I'LL ask no more: nay, for my manhood's sake
That which thou dost not give I will not need;
The tribute of my pain, thou shalt not take
Where love is gone, 'twere better to be freed.

Then let us part; I will not crave a kiss
From those soft lips where sweetest falsehoods dwell,
Nor will I stay to see another's bliss,
The world is wide enough for me! Farewell!

THE FORGOTTEN CHIEFTAINS

I CAME across Schehallion
And down to Rannoch's shore,
But all the Chieftains of the vale
They could be found no more.

The Robertsons of Struan,
The Menzies of the moor,
The Macdonalds of Loch Tummel,
The Stewarts proud and poor.

They taxed them all when living,
They taxed them still when dead,
Till debts and loans and mortgages
Had left them not a shred.

Their ancient halls and homesteads
Were sold by auctioneers,
And now disdainful mountains
Look down on profiteers.

One little sacred foothold
Was left out of their sales,
The graveyards of the vanished Chiefs
Above their lovely vales.

And there upon the mountain side
The tall firs vigil keep,
Till God shall call them to Himself,
Forgotten, where they sleep.

DECEMBER 1914

THE Chieftain wandered to the Loch
And stood upon the shore,
And dreamed of his lost bonny son
Who'd range the hills no more.

He thought of all his ancestry
Far stretching in the past,
With none to follow in his steps
Of all his race, the last.

The chilly waves made murmuring sounds
Upon the pebbles bare,
The wintry wind came roughly by
And lifted his white hair.

The Loch was shining in the sun
Careless of human ills,
And all around in snowy shrouds
The everlasting hills.

Long, long he stood there all alone
And gazed across the mere
Still as a statue carved in stone,
Wrapt in a gloom austere.

At last he turned with stately tread
And sought his empty hearth,
And never more came forth till borne
Along the graveyard path.

THE SOUTHERN CROSS

WHEN I sailed down the tropic seas
With land far out of sight,
I watched the mast-head swaying round
Among the stars at night.

As down and down across the world
We dropped from day to day,
The sweet old constellations gleamed
Fainter and sank away.

Night after night far to the north
Swung lower the Great Bear,
And fading dim there followed him
The lovely Cassiopeia.

Till far across the Southern skies,
For reverent eyes to see,
In majesty the great cross rose
Out of the heaving sea.

DIDO AND ÆNEAS

WHEN Dido sailed the classic Seas
In search of territory,
She founded Carthage, that should fill
The ancient world with glory.

But love o'ertook her valiant heart
When bold Æneas wooed her,
Because that crafty one alone
Among men, understood her.

But, faithless rogue, he sailed away,
As others had before him;
And left the love-lorn weeping queen
In sorrow to deplore him.

So constant man it seems must rank
With Life's impossibilities,
And Dido now proclaims the fact
Among the old divinities.

PENELOPE AND ULYSSES

OLD Homer called Penelope
A chaste and faithful wife,
Although Ulysses left her for
The best part of her life.

She kept her suitors all at bay
By weaving in their sight
A lovely web, the threads of which
She undid every night.

Ulysses homeward bent his steps
When twenty years had flown,
And only to the blind old dog
Was his dear master known.

Penelope, the constant, was
Rewarded to the full,
He shot the suitors with his bow
Which none of them could pull.

So ladies all, though left awhile,
Still ever faithful be,
And weave a web about your hearts
As did Penelope.

CUPID AND PSYCHE

WHEN lovely Psyche, overcome
By female curiosity,
Slipped off at night and with a lamp
Disclosed her Love's divinity ;

The beauty of the little god
So stirred her admiration,
She dropped hot oil upon his neck
In her precipitation.

Away fled Cupid, and no more
Gave to his Psyche kisses,
Because she would not take on trust
Such more than mortal blisses.

Of this sad tale of ancient days
The moral is notorious :
That love will sometimes fly away
If ladies are too curious.

EVENING SAPPHICS

FAR in the West the burning day is dying,
Venus is floating in a bed of glory,
Down in the vale the nightingale is singing
 In the dim twilight.

Up from the East the golden moon is rising,
Over the sluice the quiet water whispers,
In the cool dusk the roses round the casement
 Sway in the night-wind.

In the deep stillness through the silent wood-walk
All in the haunting breathless hour of passion,
Nearer and nearer comes the longed-for footfall
 Of my belovèd.

GLORIA

GLORIA

WHEN in the far-off years,
You dream by the candle light,
In the old chair by the fire
Through the lonely winter night,
As you chant my verse you will murmur :
" Love to youth belongs
And 'twas once for the love of me
The poet sang his songs."

(From the French of RONSARD.)

HOPE

I

LOVE is a god ! he will not stay our bidding ;
Time soon will lay his heavy hand upon us ;
Then let us drain the brimming cup of pleasure
Ere it be tasteless !

He is the patron of the young and happy.
Kissed lips are softest in life's dewy morning ;
Then let us pluck the roses in our springtime,
While they smell sweetly.

Love let us sing ! who builds the fallen palace ;
Sovran creator in a world of ruin,
Breath of all poets, glory of all women,
Love let us honour.

Praise him in the vernal hours,
Monarch of the budding flowers ;
Cup him till the feasters nod ;
Worship him—he is a god !

HOPE

II

OVER the mountains in the sun
The blazing path to climb,
Down through the deep cool chestnut woods
In passion's summer-time ;
Over the lake of Coniston
Fair Gloria to row,
With the dancing heart of sweet nineteen
That loved me long ago !

We cross the waters in a dream
And coast the farther shore,
We moor the boat and mount the slope
And near the poet's door,
Till at the gate with one soft touch
And one glance of her eye,
I know her for the loveliest thing
Under the wide wide sky !

III

SEE ! as she walks the flowers bow before her
Where she is passing down the stately garden.
Ah ! my heart fails ; my eyes dare not adventure
 Into such glory !

Nearer and nearer come her gentle footsteps,
Till I can hear the softness of her vesture,
Till I can feel her very breath upon me
 Where I am kneeling.

Here stay I prostrate without word or motion :
I dare not speak lest my rough words disturb her,
Though at her feet lie life, soul, and body,
 To do her bidding.

Onward she moves adown the pleasant wood-walks,
Through gleam and shadow thrown by swaying
 branches.

Ah ! she has gone and breathed no word of pity !
 I am forsaken.

IV

CALLOW care, to others fly,
Dwell not in my lady's eye ;
Sorrow, with your hollow cheek,
Go, some sterner victim seek.

Crabbèd age, with wrinkled laugh,
Limping on your crooked staff,
Never on my lady's face
Dare your cruel lines to trace.

Love, be her companion sweet;
Gently guide her dainty feet ;
Put to shame the spangled skies
Gazing from her tender eyes.

V

THAT Time should one day wan that face
And dim those glorious eyes,
That Death should ever dare embrace
A spirit from the skies,
Are all that gave my fainting heart
A chance for pity there,
Where I have played the suppliant's part,
Refusing to despair !

Perhaps thou wilt not deign to mourn
Or care when I am gone,
While I with this last song must turn
And face my fate alone.
Perhaps into a world I go
Where men think not nor weep,
A place where love has drowned its woe
And where the broken sleep !

HOPE

VI

HER beauty showed, as God intended,
Her gentle mind's reflections ;
Her very loveliness offended
Our mortal imperfections.

And though the gift of Pentecost
Were mine, I could but wait,
Prone like a spirit of the lost,
Silent at Heaven's gate.

FULFILMENT

I

FAR up the river through the sunny meadows,
Heaven and earth attending on her beauty,
Gloria floats reclining like a Dryad
Lost in a day-dream.

Long as the blazing noon is passing westward
Under the trees we sit among the fern-brakes,
There of the world forgetful and forgotten
Plucking the lotus.

Then in the evening down the peaceful waters
Homeward we glide with sleepy rhythmic splashing,
Gloria silent, by the tangled wood-walks
Sweetly dishevelled.

On his last flight the droning beetle hurries,
Out of the east the purple night arises,
Lonely in Heaven above the amber sun-glow
Rapturous Venus.

Quitting the oars I lay me down before her ;
On her pure hand my lips profane adventure ;
Into her soul a pang of pity enter :
I am forgiven.

Stars in the sky above us dance for gladness ;
Over the world the night wind sighs with passion,
Breathing her name, my Queen, my Queen for ever,
Gloria regnans !

FULFILMENT

II

Up through love's infinite ascent
I climbed from steep to steep;
Into her soul I poured my own—
'Twas deep calling to deep—
Till in the silence of that night
'Neath the stars we stood alone:
She turned and gave herself to me,
And her sweet lips touched my own.

FULFILMENT

III

THE joys laid up hereafter,
For the spirits of the just,
May pass man's understanding
Till dust returns to dust;
But in this flesh corruptible
With love's first kiss arise
Visions transfiguring the earth
Into a Paradise.

SEPARATION

I

LAST night we parted at the gate
Where Love with us had often sat ;
Hand linked in hand we went forlorn
Adown the pathway through the corn ;
One longing clasp of breast to breast,
One choking sob told all the rest !
Our sun went down ; no hope, no light !
 Last night, last night !

Oh ! halting tongue, attempt no speech
When hearts are severed each from each ;
Oh ! anguish inarticulate,
When soul from soul is separate.
Dark and alone my life must be
Till Gloria come to comfort me !
My sun went down ; no hope, no light !
 Last night, last night !

SEPARATION

II

Now in the silent hours of the night,
Far o'er the cold earth under northern skies,
Nestled she lies so fragrant and so white,
The happy pillow kissing her closed eyes.

Sleep on, my little sweet and twenty, sleep
While all the angels guard your purity ;
And in my dreams I'll touch that scarlet lip
That never speaks but in dear charity.

SEPARATION

III

THE seaweed in the dim-lit cave
Awaits the sure returning wave ;
The rustling corn beneath the stars
Awaits the crimson Eastern bars ;
When Gloria is gone I must
Secure my peace in perfect trust.

SEPARATION

IV

Good fare, a happy company
And laughter free,
And toasts and healths, and merry jests
And jollity.

A pushing back of chairs, farewells
Till next we meet,
A muffling on of coats, and then
The moon-blanchèd street.

Night with her silent sovereignty
Asserts her power ;
The old church clock tolls out
The midnight hour ;

And Jupiter looks down across
The silver seas,
Abetting the sweet influence of
The Pleiades.

Ah ! did I then for one short hour
Forget you, dear ?
Come back then into my poor heart,
And fill it here,—

Here in the solitary street,
Silent and white,
Beneath the innumerable stars
And sacred night !

Cold moon, I gaze into your face
With wistful eyes,
For you can shine across the world
Where Gloria lies.

Queen of the night, regard us both
With kindly eye,
And gather us to your white heart
Benignantly.

Eternal night and everlasting
Starry sky,
I know not aught of what ye are
Or what am I.

But this I know,—Love can alone
All things restore,
And of that love supreme ye speak
For evermore!

SEPARATION

V

WHEN in the dawn awake I lie,
Over the world my fancies fly
To a little chamber, white and fair,
With all I love enclosed there ;
And I whisper in her dainty ear,
“ Ah, Gloria, as fair as dear,
Come back to me ere summer's flown ;
Come soon, come soon ! ”

The rosy sun through casement peeping
Can kiss her there so gently sleeping,
Can mingle with her dream's sweet story,
And bathe her tender limbs in glory ;
Ah ! happy sun ! that I were there !
Ah, Gloria, as dear as fair,
Come back to me ere summer's flown ;
Come soon, come soon !

SEPARATION

VI

OVER the high full moon to-night
The fleecy clouds are flying,
The ministry of spangled frost
Along the wet road lying ;

Past midnight, and the last footfall
Has passed my cottage door ;
Below the cliff the sleepless waves
Break on the dreaming shore ;

And far away the headlands dim
Fade in the glimmering haze ;
The flowing tide comes brimming in,
Deep in enchanted bays ;

And the great love that throngs my heart
Unveils all to my sight,
And gives me soul to know and feel
The loveliness of night !

SEPARATION

VII

I AWAKEN in the darkness of the night,
And the rain and wind are roaring from the sea ;
I stretch my arms to clasp her in affright,
And a dread empty silence mocks at me.

'Tis said far over darkling hill and dale,
And o'er the star-lit multitudinous main,
Bringing its love-song like the nightingale,
That soul can speak to soul and back again.

Yet give to me, dear Lord, what once has been :
Two hearts together singing to one song.
How long must earth and ocean roll between ?
Ah ! waiting, breaking heart ! how long ? how
long ?

SEPARATION

VIII

SINK, sink, red sun, into the West,
Flash out, dim stars, upon the night,
Roll faster round, great world, and bring
My best beloved to my sight !

Pass, pass, dull hours, more quickly pass
To where the day in glory dies,
Come love with me, mount hand in hand
Up to the door of Paradise.

Sink, sink, red sun, into the West,
Flash out, dim stars, upon the night,
Roll faster round, great world, and bring
My best beloved to my sight !

REUNION

I

OVER the murky earth I sweep
Through black night in the roaring train,
Mile after mile, while the world's asleep,
Up out of death to life again !

I hear her calling from afar ;
She leans from Heaven to take my hand ;
She rises with the morning star
Across the waking sea and land.

Each scarlet lip a lover's choice,
Her eyes the world's enravishment,
And to the mortal ear her voice
The harmony of the firmament !

Throw wide the everlasting gate,
And lead me to love's crown and throne.
Into your heart inviolate,
Ah ! let me melt, belovèd one !

REUNION

II

Music in a rhythmic measure
Throbbing down the corridor,
Silk and satin, and light laughter,
Mellow lights and polished floor.

Mazy dance whose dainty motion
Makes fair women doubly fair,
Jocund youth and careless beauty
Sweeping by together there.

She is there among the dancers :
I am there too, but unseen,
Watching all her gracious movements,
Gloria, my Queen, my Queen !

On her dazzling neck and shoulders,
On her head set royally,
On the sweet lines of her bosom,
Falls the light caressingly.

She is mine, all mine for ever,
Mine ! mine to the uttermost !
And for that immortal guerdon
I would count the world well lost !

REUNION

III

I've the cottage down out Devon way,
With a garden and a stream,
And a lawn with leaning apple trees
That droop their limbs and dream.

And the robins and the thrushes
And the little Jenny wren
Are nesting in the bushes,
For the spring is round again.

The nipping blasts are over,
And the south-west wind's begun,
And the rosebuds round the casement
Are swinging in the sun ;

And all the world is humming
May's rapturous high tune,
And Gloria is coming
To crown the pomp of June !

LOSS

I

VEILED by no cloud the Sovran Sun blazed from above,
As I went up across the heath to meet my love.
So will all Nature, smiling, mock at credulous men,
When God resolves the world to chaos back again.
So was it on that day, though no cold word was said,
Yet on the instant sure I knew myself betrayed !
A shadow swept upon the wide world, covering all
And on my heart the darkness settled like a pall.
Then came there through the portal of my tortured
brain

An awful presence, on a black throne, there to reign ;
And now at last I know, too late, that, could we
choose,

'Tis better never to have loved than thus to lose !

LOSS

II

THERE'S passion in the gold kingcup,
And a glory in the sky ;
And the gallant Spring comes marching up
With the love-light in his eye !

But love in May grows cold in June,
And false before September ;
And sweetest songs are out of tune
Long, long before December.

And I am old and weary, dear,
And pride must break or bend ;
What's gone is gone for ever here
Unto the sad world's end !

LOSS

III

DEAR, when I would have kissed,
 You turned away ;
Love's benediction missed
 And went astray.

Surely on some far shore
 Beyond our sky
Is garnered evermore
 Each lover's sigh !

Surely, though passion fail
 In you for me,
'Tis fit my troth prevail
 Eternally !

Therefore for what is past—
 Known, felt, and seen—
I'll thank God to the last
 That it has been !

LOSS

IV

FAIR daughter of a traitor race
That took the love it ne'er returned,
In the cold beauty of your face
I read the fate those others learned.

Is there no spell to bring you near,
And have I lived my life in vain?
Is there no word, however dear,
To win you back to me again?

If from the past I now must part,
If love again can never be,
Ah! take your hand from off my heart,
And may the dear Lord comfort me!

LOSS

V

AN ! dearest faithless one,
Guide of my lost life's story ;
O'er whose heart do you reign ?
Where waste you now your glory ?

Sings he the poet's song
To celebrate your beauty ?
Owns he the painter's soul
To worship as a duty ?

Will he your sweet self make
His religion and his faith,
Enthroning you in heaven
Above all life and death ?

Nay ! he can never know
All that such passion means,
As in my heart of hearts
I gave my Queen of Queens !

LOSS

VI

PAST the old haunts ! the farm upon the hill,
The river like a thread of silver lies :
I see the waving corn and poppies still,
The world all gold, and Sun-god in the skies,
Peace in the heart, and love-light in the eyes
Of long ago !

Past the old haunts ! past hill and farm again,
And river like a path of silver spread :
No sun, no corn, no golden world remain ;
And love grows faint, and vain regret is dead :
Pain alone stays when all the rest has fled
Of long ago !

LOSS

VII

DEAR, is it nothing—all the years
Of an adoring love ?
Is it nothing that I raised to you
What saints accept above ?

When the hunger of my heart blots out
All things in Heaven and earth,
When I would die that you might live,
Is it all nothing worth ?

Close down the page then, write no more,
And let the curtain fall ;
For life is naught, and death is naught,
Where love is all in all.

Without a pang you take away
All which I thought my own ;
So here's the end : and I must fare
Into the world alone !

VIII

АH ! had I thought thou couldst be false
And wear a double face,
Or that such innocent sweet looks
Could hide deceit so base,
I had not given thee the life
I cannot take again,
Nor brought thee through the door of love
Into my heart in vain !

But he who gave the tender soul,
By woman to be vexed,
Left it to bear the utmost pains
Of this world or the next ;
And though henceforth the Lord of Hell
For ever be my guest,
Yet from the Pit I'll lift my prayer
That thou still shalt be blessed !

LOOKING BACK

THE flowers still blow upon the hill
Where we together stood,
The winds sigh through the solemn trees
In which the rooks still brood ;
Yet all the glory of the world
That stretches to the sea
But celebrates my loneliness
Since Gloria went from me.

The deep below, the sky above,
Reck not of human ills ;
There comes no comfort from the waves
Nor answer from the hills.
Careless of mortal miseries,
Renewed from day to day,
Taking no heed of any prayers,
The great globe goes its way.

Yet when I stood here long ago
And watched the flowing tide,
The world seemed full of grace and hope
With Gloria at my side ;
For when we love, a deeper sight
God's mercy yet may send,
And what the reason still denies
The heart may comprehend.

OUTWARD BOUND

OUTWARD BOUND

Down the Sound to the open sea,
Fronting the south-west wind,
With the great Atlantic rolling free,
And our hearts left far behind ;

Over the hills and far away,
Down in a sunny dell,
My little sweetheart sings all day
In a garden I know well.

Infinite space 'mid the stars above
And below,—the infinite deep,
Alone on the bridge I pray my love
Will true and loyal keep.

Though wild wastes of waters roll
Between my dear and me,
My faith is surer than the pole,
And deeper than the sea !

HOMeward BOUND

I LOVE to hear the music
Of the gale among the shrouds,
And the roaring of the billows
Beneath the rugged clouds,
And the racing of the engine
As her bows go out of sight,
And the wailing of the eight bells
Upon the wild midnight!

And down across the tropics,
Where the sea's as smooth as glass,
I love to watch the shimmer
On the flying fish that pass.
And o'er the starlit waters
I gaze astern at night
At the wake all phosphorescent
That stretches out of sight.

But when we're sailing homeward
And Portland Bill is passed,
And slipping up the Solent
We make the good ship fast,
Then all the boasted glories
Of distant sea and shore
Serve but to make me love thee,
Dear England, more and more.

SCHEHALLION

IN the fragrant strath I found you
Up your native mountain hollow,
Where the purple heather flowered
by the loch.

There your loveliness possessed me
With a flood of deep desire,
While we climbed the hoar Schehallion
through the dew.

To the west the Glencoe Shepherds,
All around the dreaming mountains
Lifted from the world together
to the skies.

Perished now, those passionate visions,
Never, never more returning,
Lost with that forgotten summer
long ago.

Now the falling hours bring me
Vain regrets so sweet and bitter,
Like the long roll of the wide sea
on my soul.

GOOD INTENTIONS

AN evil proverb says that Hell
Is paved with good intentions,
Such ancient lies can only be
The Devil's own inventions.

Though good intentions fail and fail
Till seventy times seven,
God takes the will for better things
To pave the floor of Heaven.

Those who still try to struggle on
And fall, and stagger up,
Who sink with bleeding feet, and drink
Remorse's bitter cup ;

Who through their prison bars can see
The road they never trod,
Yet through their tears gaze up toward
The distant hills of God ;

Oh ! surely these, who to the end
Have wished those heights to win,
Will reach the feet of Him who still
Forgives us all our sin.

THE PICTURE

Oh ! that those eyes could see me,
Oh ! that those lips could speak,
 And give me again
 What without pain
I never more can seek.

There let the dream of beauty,
Richly serenely still,
 In a vision strange
 That cannot change
Its loveliness fulfil.

Now in the hallowed gloaming
Fades the sweet face from sight.
 But I seem to hear
 A footfall near,
'Twixt twilight and the night.

Oh ! that those eyes could see me,
Oh ! that those lips could speak,
 And give me again
 What without pain
I never more can seek.

THE EMPTY HOUSE

Oh, it's dreary work to start again upon the daily
round

When no one waits your footstep on the floor,
And the house is dark and empty, when you reach
your home at night,
And not a word of welcome at the door.

And it's lonely in the daytime, and it's lonelier at
night,

When sinking ashes on the fender fall,
And while noises from the street below have slowly
died away
You sit for hours staring at the wall.

As you touch the dear familiar things, and mark the
vacant chair,

And wander round the empty rooms alone,
You recall each tender memory with hopeless vain
regrets,
And the sinking heart within you turns to stone.

And you think of all the loving things you long so
much to say,—

You'd give the world the past to recreate,—
But the door is shut upon you, and across it there is
writ

The saddest of all human words,—“Too late!”

SONGS TO DESIDERIA

SONGS TO DESIDERIA

I

How can you write so tenderly
Who love from me withhold,
With heart as inaccessible
As Pole-Star, and as cold ?

A gentle touch, quickly withdrawn,
A smile that comes too late,
Glimpses of inner Paradise
To one kept at the gate.

A word half loving taken back,
Repulse, soul-hunger, pain,
Then the cold shoulder of the world
Between us once again !

Dear, from this doubting misery
Give me my soul's release,
Yield me your heart, and let me know
True love's impassioned peace !

SONGS TO DESIDERIA

II

THEY talk of Botticelli and his mediæval saints,
But there's none to touch my lady 'mong the angels
 that he paints,
And all his hallowed eremites are nothing to my dear
With the shadow of a glory in the wavings of her hair.

The poets praise the Medici, that little Queen of Love,
And other marble effigies of goddesses above.
But had they lived to look on her, they would confess,
 I swear,
That all their stone divinities were nothing to my
 dear.

Then let them keep their paintings of the faded saints
 of old
And all their graven images of Venus still and cold,
Give me the glance of life and love in Desideria's
 eyes,
And the white wonder of her arms enclosing Paradise !

SONGS TO DESIDERIA

III

GIVE me, dear Lord, the patient will
To wait without the closed door,
To love in absence deeper still
And trust through silence evermore.

SONGS TO DESIDERIA

IV

WHEN Desideria with a glance
My willing heart enchains,
The raptures of a thousand springs
Rush tingling through my veins,
And while the reason warns the mind
How false Love's beacon gleams,
The living soul within me laughs,
Builds castles, and dreams dreams !

And though beside her innocence
My whole life seems a sham,
Though she belongs to Paradise
And I—am what I am !
Yet there's a passion in my heart
That prudence cannot check,
For in a vision I have felt
Her arms about my neck !

SONGS TO DESIDERIA

V

If word of mine has brought you pain,
Ask me not to repent,
No speech of you my lip could stain
That was not reverent ;
Should you forbid me to declare
What cannot be unsaid,
'Tis to condemn my life to share
The silence of the dead.

For dwelling sanctified apart
Where evil never trod,
There has been gathered to your heart
The providence of God.
My very prayers by night and day
Your intercession need,
And if you now should turn away,
Then I am lost indeed !

SONGS TO DESIDERIA

VI

You'RE just the fairest of the fair
Down to your finger-tips ;
Come to me, sweet and twenty-one,
Give me your rosy lips !

To-morrow brings your birthday round,
And till the world shall cease
God keep you, dearest of the dear,
And fill you with His peace.

Time works his will with both of us,
With each in different ways,
For you ascend while I go down
The stairways of our days.

Alas ! for me the falling hours
Are stealing youth away,
I cannot feel as once I felt
The live-long happy day.

Yet when in benediction
Your soft eyes rest on me,
I take again the dancing heart
Of jocund twenty-three !

SONGS TO DESIDERIA

VII

WHEN every flower of the world
Had perished in the frost,
When every day was desolate
And every hope was lost,
When love was dead, and faith had failed
And memory was pain,
Into your own you took my heart
And bade it live again !

And now the glory of the earth
Is visible once more
And visions of God's Paradise
Through the unfolded door,
And choirs of the cherubim
Are chanting from above
That till the law of death be dead
The law of life is love !

SONGS TO DESIDERIA

VIII

ARE not all things elusive that are fair ?
And difficult of access that are sweet ?
Lest the unworthy should find entrance there
Where timorously tread the reverent feet !
Therefore you vanish to the land of dreams,
A phantom of the memory night and day,
And I am left the silent solitude
That lingers in the chamber where you lay.
Though you have gone, the sense of you remains,
An exquisite thought, an aspiration fair,
A tender vision the soul dwells upon
And dwelling on it finds itself in prayer.

SONGS TO DESIDERIA

IX

WHENE'ER I hear your gentle voice
Speak softly in my ear,
Life seems no more a mystery
But a gift great and clear ;
And through the years while I survive,
The memory is mine
Of having held my breath and felt
An ecstasy divine.

Yet when we parted in the gloom
Of that far Northern land,
And on my shoulder tremblingly
You laid your tender hand,
Without a word I went my way
Transfigured blessedly,
As though an angel had passed by,
Touched, and absolvèd me.

For there's a love too deep for speech,
Too wonderful for tears,
Recorded by the Seraphim
Amid the silent spheres ;
Communion sweet of life with life
Each in the other blent,
The sublimation of two souls,
A stainless Sacrament.

SONGS TO DESIDERIA

X

Soon we shall meet, and then will come to me
Sense of your presence turning the heart faint
With sick desire; the little diamond
Sparkling his passionless eye, close nestling warm
In rapturous couch where I adventure not
Will mock me with each tender taken breath;
And I shall marvel at the glories given
To stocks and stones, while I who live and long
May never touch those lily sanctities,—
My throne and kingdoms in a world profane!
And will you look above my lowly head?
Ah, most Adorable! the Saints in Heaven
Need not the benediction of your eyes
So much as I; and the long nights and days
Are not enough for me to celebrate
All the sweet reasons of my jealousy
Till you look down with pity where I lie.

SONGS TO DESIDERIA

XI

WITH every day you grow in loveliness,
The very perfect flower of the world
Before all time divinely fore-ordained
To be the guerdon of some King of men ;
And though I see you in my dreams removed
Far from me up the innumerable stairs
Whose top is lost in glory round your feet,
Though I may never climb up to your side,
Yet will I dare to spread aspiring wings ;
The shattered majesty of Icarus
Prone on the waves magnificent appears
Beyond fulfilled desires of lesser souls !
And since the day when under summer skies
The splendid vision of your beauty dawned
Bringing a tumult of sweet thronging love,
A mad impulse has overwhelmed my heart
To hazard life and death for such a prize ;
And being a man, ah ! Desideria !
Death would be joy, oblivion ecstasy,
Did you vouchsafe me a last sanctuary
To breathe this world away upon your lips.

SONGS TO DESIDERIA

XII

LISTEN to me! Divinest Heart of Hearts!
Life has no meaning till love enters in.
Probing and delving till their backs are bent
And eyes are dimmed, the thinkers of the world
Seek the solution of its mystery,
But it remains ever insoluble;
And some go mad, and others break their hearts
When at the last they find all spent for naught.

Ah! if they only knew that from such fate
One gentle hand outstretched might rescue them,
That into their sad tangled lives, confused,
Astray, obscure, and full of weariness,
One lovely influence has power to heal,
Transform, and bring in quiet thankfulness,
Then would they surely rise up and go forth
Among the flowers under the blue sky,
Learning at last all that they need to learn,
That one who loves has never lived in vain.

For Truth is of the Spirit, and descends
Freely to poet-heart of happy lover.
Therefore all ye who know the glorious pangs
Of passion, unto you alone is given
Truly to find the meaning of the world,
The mystery of being, testifying
That darkly without hope men wander here

Until they reach this everlasting door
Into the House of Life, where hand in hand
With the Belov'd upon the blazing threshold
They hear the morning stars together sing
And all the Sons of God shouting for joy!

LAST SONG TO DESIDERIA

THE comforters have left me, I am alone ;
Close down the foolish page, shut the world's door ;
Break, break, oh, desolate heart ! for she is gone,
Gone, gone for ever, and for evermore !

Deep in the earth is Desideria laid
With a stone set at her feet and at her head ;
All debts between my God and me are paid,
For love is all ; and all is finished.

Come then to-night, again, oh, mighty Death,
And join my soul to hers thou hast removed ;
Across the world there steals the tremulous breath
Of the last infinite dawn !—I come, Belovèd.

FORGIVENESS

FORGIVENESS

HAD we nothing here to pardon,
Nothing here to be forgiven,
We might seem to be more perfect,
More near to Heaven ;

But the sweetest of all virtues
Would be taken from our lives,
That fair flower in Love's garland
When she forgives.

THE WHITE ROSE

AN ! fair white rose of Scotland,
How many tears were shed
To save your plighted honour,
How many hearts have bled.

Emblem of faith and fealty
The cold north ever brings
To the forlorn lost causes
And crowns of vanished kings.

Sweet as her fragrant valleys,
Fresh as her land-locked seas,
Free as the stormy sunsets
Beyond her Hebrides.

True as the mother's blessing
Who o'er the cradle leans,
Dear as the tender bosom
Of my own Queen of Queens.

TO ARIEL

(His Majesty's Theatre, February 1905)

Oh! dainty dancer! what rapt virginal love,
What pure enticement fills you as you move!
Art and sweet Nature, Nature and sweet Art,
Blend in a subtle conquest of the heart.

Happy and ever tireless you seem
As swallow leaping in the gold sunbeam,
Bright as the sea's far path of fairy lights
Laughing beneath the moon on summer nights;
In tender gesture linking dreams of love
With aspirations earthly thoughts above,
Fair echo of the harmony that steers
The rhythmic revolution of the spheres!

TO THE FAIR OPHELIA .

With some Flowers (at the Lyceum)

GATHERED flowers are the fairest,
Sweetest on their dying day,
Giving Death their incense rarest
As they sigh their life away !

You most sweetly win the heart
When like these fair flowers you die,
When life-wearied you depart
In your cold death-bed to lie.

But, oh, flowers ! born to sorrow,
Breathe not yet your last frail breath ;
Live to comfort on the morrow
Her new life with your sweet death !

MIDNIGHT SAPPHICS

FROM the spent hearth the light is slowly fading,
Pitiless winds are wailing in the chimney,
Sorrows and fears and memory's sad phantoms
Crowd the dim chamber.

Fainter and fainter sink the dying embers,
In the deep shadows rise beloved faces,
Voices are whispering old familiar hauntings
Years never silence.

See, the last flicker dies upon the hearthstone,
Fading away till all is cold and cheerless ;
So must the past sink down into the darkness
Ashes to ashes !

Hark, how the rain is beating on the windows !
Out in the storm the houseless and forsaken
Suffer in silence, while the howling whirlwind
Shows them no mercy.

High in his palace warmly lies the prelate,
Under the hedge the wretched tramp is dying,
Let the heart break, for, sure it is, the crooked
Cannot be straightened !

THE "COMUS ROOM" IN LUDLOW CASTLE

WHERE is now the measured music
Framed to clothe the lofty rhyme,
Through this stately hall that echoed
In the day of Ludlow's prime ?

Where are now the gentle ladies
And the silken youths so gay,
Ranged along the gorgeous hangings
From these walls now bulged and grey ?

All are gone ! the broad roof vanished
From which hung the swinging lights,
Through the long drawn windows shining
To the far-off shepherd wights.

Ruins following the poet,
Back to earth down-crumbling slow,
All forgetful of the glories
That they looked on long ago.

Thoughts of passion, dreams of beauty,
Sojourned here and fled away,
Leaving but the skull that held them
Bleaching in a drear decay.

Thus do all our efforts perish,
E'en the highest and the best,
Ruthless Time for ever turning
Human grandeur to a jest !

A PRAYER

LORD, for the weak and sinful do we pray,
For those with hidden crimes upon their hearts,
For him who stifles conscience all the day,
But in the night at his own shadow starts !

For lonely ones with no one upon earth
To share the burden of their misery,
On whom no tender guiding hand from birth
Was laid to lead their falt'ring steps to Thee.

For those who lovèd much and were betrayed,
Left with their sinking dread alone to grieve,
Who, in their anguish, are to pray afraid
To Thee Who wait'st to pardon and receive.

We pray for all who have been trodden down,
To whom the morning light no comfort brings,
Who down the wind of this bleak world are blown,—
Great Bearer of the burdens, King of Kings !

ULTIMA REQUIES

Just a few hopes, just a few sighs,
Just a few visions of delight ;
Just a few dreams of Paradise,
And kisses in the night.

Just a few friends that come and go ;
Brief, eager youth, and briefer age,
The warp and woof of joy and woe,
And then the closed page.

Just a few comrades in the fight
Shoulder to shoulder in the throng,
Just a last struggle for the right
In a mad world of wrong.

Lord, grant me with my latest breath,
'Mid failing faiths and death's alarms,
The still small voice, and underneath
The Everlasting Arms.

THE IMMUTABLE STARS

With failing faith and dim uncertain hope,
With lonely heart long empty of desire,
I lifted weary eyes to Heaven and saw
The eternal patience of the immutable stars.

SAPPHICS IN THE NIGHT

SHORT is the night, too short for tender loving,
Far in the West the pallid moon is dying.
Through the tall trees there comes a stirring whisper
In the dim twilight.

Down in the garden in their leafy ambush
Birds are awaking with their murmurous flutings,
While from the East a spreading veil of amber
Heralds the morning.

Ah, soon too soon the years will come upon us
When this imperious ecstasy will perish,
Then let us drink the cup of sweet desire
With hurried passion !

SONG OF THE COLONIAL TROOPS

Through the glory of the morning
We are marching to the fight
From the darkness left behind us
On into the rising light.
Out upon the far horizon
We can hear the bullets sing,
There we'll strike, and live or die
for England's King.

Through the burden of the noonday
High we lift our flags of war,
Foot by foot we struggle onward
To the goal that lies before.
For the right with swords uplifted
Round the world our hosts we bring,
For the dear old country's sake
and England's King.

When the long-fought day is over
And the sun sinks to his rest,
When the smoke and dust of battle
Fade into the golden West,
Then a thousand thousand veterans
To the sky this anthem fling,
"Glory be to Freedom's throne
and England's King!"

AT THE WELL AT JOPPA

Down by the well at Joppa once I lingered
Watching the Sun descend into the ocean;—
Lovely and tall and lifting high her pitcher
 on her fair forehead,
Proud with the blood of countless generations
And the repose of all her Eastern fathers,
Onward she came until she stood beside me
 gently expectant.
No word we spoke, for we had none in common,
Only by signs I told her I had travelled
Far over weary sea and land to meet her
 here at the well-head.
Down, down she swung the vessel to the water,
Dripping she brought it to the sun-dried margin,
Then with grave gesture offered me the nectar
 there in the twilight
Round her fair neck I hung a beaded necklace,
On to my lips she laid a tender greeting,
Then turned and passed from out my life for ever
 through the dark shadows.

SWANAGE BAY

THE evening light is on the sea,
Down in the old old town
The church bells sound across the bay,
And the great Sun goes down.

Far out across the peaceful sea,
Out to the boundless main,
The great ship carries some who ne'er
Will see their home again.

The dusk is stealing o'er the waves,
Faint comes the evening bell,
A trace of smoke, and all is gone !
Farewell, brave hearts, farewell !

DUST, UNTO DUST

Dust unto dust ! how soon shall I have vanished !
Never again to write the tender love-song,
Never again to see the moon uprising
in the dark garden.

Never again to hear the quiet murmur
Made by the water running through the sluice-gate,
While the white mist lies softly o'er the meadows
round the old homestead.

Life is the frailest of all earthly visions,
Soon all is lost except the poet's verses,
Gods and their temples sink to common ruin,
nothing to nothing !

Ah ! but perhaps when I am long forgotten
Some verse of mine may linger down the ages,
Keeping your loveliness still to be desired
by unborn lovers.

FINIS